

familiar in the San Diego region in recent years, but this won't be an ordinary year. So far, we have seen twice as many fires as usual, and the worst months are yet to come.

Many who have been forced to leave their homes speak of how, in those moments when they fear they might lose everything, they realize what is most important to them.

Now, it is time for Congress to remember what is important, the vital programs that Americans rely on in times of crisis.

With natural disasters worsening across the country, it is more important than ever to ensure that agencies like the Forest Service, the National Weather Service, and FEMA have the resources they need to keep Americans informed and safe.

This appropriations season, I urge my colleagues to come together, as I have watched San Diego County residents do, and prioritize these lifesaving services for all Americans.

□ 1215

THE \$4 BILLION INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD PROJECT—HALTED

(Mr. CHAFFETZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, it was April 2009 when President Obama said that he was going to form an integrated electronic health record project to take the records between the DOD and Veterans Administration and, together, he said that it "would represent a huge step towards modernizing the way health care is delivered and benefits are administered for our Nation's veterans. It would cut through red tape and reduce the number of administrative mistakes."

Fast forward to February of 2013. The Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration announced that they were going to halt this program. It was a \$4 billion—not \$4 million, not \$40 million, not \$400 million—a \$4 billion project. Secretary Hagel, and I quote him: "I didn't think we knew what the hell we were doing."

So after all these years, \$4 billion later, they totally halted and abandoned this project that was going to improve the quality of health care for our veterans. It wasn't for a lack of money, but there was a lack of leadership and management and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot stand. We do need to do better for our veterans. This has got to be a national priority.

PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER

(Mr. CARTWRIGHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, the threats posed

by extreme weather were added to the GAO's High Risk List, which lists the most pressing fiscal exposures our Federal Government faces. In the past 2 years alone, extreme weather events resulted in 109 Presidential major disaster declarations, 409 fatalities, and \$130 billion in economic losses to our Nation.

As somebody who firmly believes we must better prepare for extreme weather, protect government and private sector resources, and create a more resilient society, I have drafted legislation that utilizes these recommendations of the GAO. The PREPARE Act requires agencies to implement government-wide resiliency, preparedness, and risk management priorities; improves regional coordination; and disseminates best practices and actionable data. And possibly even more important is the cost of this legislation: \$0, while having the possibility of saving taxpayers billions.

BRAND USA

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support policies that will grow our economy.

The travel industry employs over 1 million Floridians. Recently, tourism to Florida has resulted in more than \$70 billion of revenue, and it has generated nearly \$900 billion nationally.

I recently introduced the Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act, which would extend the activities of Brand USA, a public-private partnership that markets the U.S. as a tourism destination. This will continue to promote job growth in Florida.

Florida's trend, however, is not reflected nationwide, unfortunately. Sadly, over 800,000 Americans gave up looking for work in April alone. This should not be the new normal.

The House has passed over 40 jobs-related bills that will promote private sector growth. The Brand USA reauthorization is another jobs bill that will get America working again. I urge support to grow our economy.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak out against the refusal to extend a critical lifeline for the unemployed. On December 28, the Republicans' failure to extend Emergency Unemployment Compensation left 1.3 million jobless Americans out in the cold. Since then, more than 332,000 Californians have lost their benefits, including over 8,000 people in Alameda County, where my district is located.

And I would like to remind my colleagues across the aisle that the long-

term unemployment rate is still at 35.3 percent, the highest it has been since World War II.

This Tea Party-controlled Congress has decided to turn their backs on these unemployed workers when their need is greatest. These workers paid into unemployment so that, in their time of need, it would be there.

This failure to act has already cost our economy nearly \$5 billion. This failure to act is mean-spirited, it is economically foolish, and it is morally wrong. Republicans won't support investments in job creation, infrastructure, or workforce training. They gut the safety net in the Ryan budget and won't extend unemployment benefits. My goodness, what in the world are people going to do? This is not the American way.

I urge us to take up this unemployment compensation bill; and let's pass it, and pass it right away.

HONORING ILLINOIS' WINNERS OF THE EARLY CAREER RESEARCH PROGRAM FUNDING

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the recipients of the Early Career Research Program grants. Only the best and brightest in the country are chosen, and I am pleased to say that five out of the 35 winners are from Illinois. Two of the winners were Fermi scientists from the 14th District of Illinois, and another is a joint appointee with the lab and Northwestern University.

Under this program, scientists will receive at least \$150,000 per year to aid them with their research efforts in the next 5 years. I am confident that the continued work of all of the talented winners will lead to breakthroughs we cannot even predict.

Innovative minds like those at Fermilab are essential for the continuing success of our country. We should continue supporting their essential work and help show the next generation that there is a future for them in science.

EXTEND EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TODAY

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, it has now been more than 4 months since Congress let emergency unemployment insurance expire. In that time, more than 2.8 million job seekers, including 200,000 veterans, have lost the ability to provide for their families. Another 72,000 Americans are losing critical unemployment benefits every week.

Let's be clear: these are people actively looking for work who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Both are requirements for receiving